



USAID/CAMBODIA INITIATIVES

In 2003, USAID/Cambodia launched a new basic education initiative designed to improve the quality and relevance of basic education for children in grades 1 to 9. Specifically, the program increases the number of children receiving quality educational programming, strengthens teaching skills, provides a new curriculum for Grades 1 to 9 and increases the number of communities involved in their schools. The program is implemented by the **Research Triangle Institute (RTI)** which provides advisory training and other services to the Ministry of Education.

A 2004 Baseline Assessment helped identify ways in which parents and school officials could have input into a new curriculum. A series of other steps have also been carried out, including the adoption of curriculum policy principles that provide a basis for adopting new standards of educational achievement. Already, staff have been hired and the drafting of a new curriculum and revised standards for lower grades is almost completed. The adoption of a new *Education Sector Strategy Paper (2004-2008)* with input from the donor community is another important step. It should improve coordination and help shape interventions in education by both government and the donor community over the next several years.

In 2005, USAID/Cambodia launched a second basic education initiative, this one focused on inclusion for Cambodia's under-served populations. In this case, the emphasis is on both access and quality. The intent is to (1) increase enrollments; (2) reduce drop-out rates; and (3) decrease absenteeism. Activities focus on three provinces, Kampong Cham, Kratie and Monduliri. Target populations include the rural poor as well as Cambodia's minority populations, including the disabled and members of the Cham and tribal communities. The program is implemented by the NGO **World Education**, which has extensive prior experience in working on education issues in Cambodia. Other partners include **CARE** and **KAPE**, a Kampong Cham based NGO.

BACKGROUND

Cambodia's educational system has made enormous strides in recent years. For example, primary and secondary enrollments have increased by 30 percent since 2001. Government recurrent spending on education has also increased, from nine percent in 1994 to 23.1 percent in 2004. In addition, there have been many new classrooms constructed, primarily through donor funding.

Although trends are positive, much of the progress is donor and NGO driven. Systemic problems remain, including high drop out rates and extremely low teacher salaries, ranging upwards from \$22 monthly. Two-thirds of schools lack water or sanitation facilities and educational quality is poor.

Both students and parents complain about the lack of relevance of education to daily life or employment. Recent analysis undertaken by USAID revealed that the vast majority of children failed to meet basic educational standards for grade promotion. Finally, many children in Cambodia have little or no access to basic education.



BASIC EDUCATION